

Oroha language

Oroha, categorized as an Austronesian language, is one of many languages spoken by Melanesian people in the Solomon Islands. It is also known as **Maramasike** (after the Maramasike Passage that separates Malaita Province's two main islands, where *masike* means 'little'), **Mara Ma-Siki** (literally "Little Mala/Mara" [to 'Tolo' people who do not have the sound [l] in their language], after the area), **Oraha**, and **Oloha**, and is used primarily in the southern part of Malaita Island within the Malaita Province. Little Mala is composed of three indigenous languages of the 'Tolo' people which are Na’oni, Pau, and Oroha. They are all slightly different, yet come from the same origin. The three languages may be thought of as different dialects of the same language. The three Tolo villages now harbor schools under the Melanesian Mission.^[3]

There are 38 people who still currently use the Oroha language today. Oroha is an indigenous, endangered Oceanic language, and its current status is shifting, meaning that its speaker community is in the process of speaking a different language, to the Sa'a language, another indigenous language of the Solomon Islands. Most of the Oroha speakers already know how to read Sa'a; therefore, it is easy to convert to using this other language. Comparing Sa'a to the Oroha language, one can see their common origins. For example, [d] in the Sa’a language corresponds to a [s] or, more commonly, to a [t] in Oroha.^[3]

The Oroha people have come from the dividing channel in Mala to their current residence. Most of the Oroha language speakers believe in Christianity.^[3]

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Oroha	
Region	South Malaita, Solomon Islands
Ethnicity	Oroha people
Native speakers	38 (1999) ^[1]
Language family	Austronesian <ul style="list-style-type: none">Malayo-Polynesian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Oceanic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southeast Solomonic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Malaita – San Cristobal<ul style="list-style-type: none">Malaita<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern<ul style="list-style-type: none">Oroha
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ora
Glottolog	oroh1237 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/oroh1237) ^[2]

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Phonology

Phonemes

The Oroha language consists of the ten consonants and five vowels presented below.^[3]

Consonant Phonemes

	Labial	Dental	Velar	Glottal
Voiceless Stop	p	t	k	
Fricative	f	s		h
Nasals	m	n		
Liquid		r		
Glide	w			

Vowel Phonemes

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Vowels have long and short versions. Doubling a vowel elongates the sound. A < ' > indicates the removal of a consonant, usually [k] or [t] are usually removed. The [r] is not rolled. Oroha lack a velar nasal [ŋ]; the dental nasal [n] is used instead.

Words can sometimes be spelled differently, indicating a slightly different pronunciation as well. For example, for 'go, come', both *raa* and *ra* are written.^[3]

Diphthongs

The diphthongs in Oroha are *ae*, *ai*, *ao*, *au*, *ei*, and *ou*.^[3]

Syllable Structure

Oroha consists only of open syllables. There are no closed syllables.^[3]

Reduplication

Verbs may be reduplicated to intensify the meaning of words. This may be done in three ways:

(1) repetition of the first syllable; *suri* to *susuri*

(2) repetition of the whole word; *horo* to *horohoro*

(3) repetition of the whole word with the omission of the inner consonant in the former member. *rahi* to *rairahi*

It can also be used to form plurality of words. For example, *mere* means child while *meramera* means children.^[3]

Morphology

Prefixes

Adjective Prefixes

Prefixes that precede some adjectives include *ma-*, *ta 'i-*, *take-*, *tara-*, and *tata-*.^[3]

Verb Prefixes

There are causative and reciprocal prefixes that are added to the beginning of verbs. The causative prefix is *ha'a*, while the reciprocal prefix is *hai* and can indicate a change or addition when adverb *or'u* is added. There are a few that may also be prefixed to nouns and adjectives as well.

Example:

ke'e / hai / sieni ro'u

[Neg. particle] / [indicates change/addition] / good / again

It will never be any good again.^[3]

Plurality

Moi and *mo* precede nouns to indicate plurality. For example, *mo hanua iwera* can mean either 'many lands' or 'many people'.^[3]

Suffixes

Noun Suffixes

Pronouns can be suffixed to other words to either add on to or change the meaning of a word. This is used mainly to show possession of an object with a noun. For example, *maa* 'eye' can be suffixed with the first person singular possessive suffix *-ku* to create *maaku* 'my eye'.^[3]

In other cases, pronouns can be added as a suffix to verbs or prepositions to reference the object of the sentence.^[3]

Adjective Suffixes

The endings - 'a and -ta 'a are placed in back of some adjectives.^[3]

Verb Suffixes

Suffixes may be included at the end of verbs in order to indicate gender. There are two forms of suffixes that can be added to verbs. The first is *i* which can stand by itself or with a consonant added prior to it. The second form is the termination of *a'i* which is suffixed to nouns to make the words into verbs.

Example:

pa'ura (i) suna / [ka] sasua'i / maaku

smoke of fire (into) / [plural inclusive] to smoke / eye

The smoke has got into my eyes.^[3]

Syntax

Word Order

The word order for Oroha sentence structure is typically Subject, Verb, Object (SVO).

Adjectives tend to take place after the noun.

Verb particles are placed before verbs.

Example sentence:

Nemo / paina, / mane / ka ma'uma'u / uhi / ine'ia / ka ta'a, / ka iria / huni / mane / saia: / "Noko / waai'o / ana / ha'a / poo, / oko / ha'asaso / ro'u." / Mane / saia / ka iria: / "Siena, / ne'ia ka'u, / ka sas / ro'u."

Rain / great, / man / fears / yams / his / are spoilt, / says / to man / (that) knows: / "I / reward you / with / shell money, / pigs, / you / make sun / again." / Man / (that) knows / says: / "Good, / wait awhile, / fine (weather) / again."

There is a lot of rain, so the man fears that his yams are spoilt, and says to the man that knows, "I will reward you with shell money and pigs if you make the sun come out again." The man that knows says, "Good, wait awhile, and fine weather will come again." ^[3]

Word Classes

Nouns

Nouns can be categorized into two set: (1) verbal nouns and (2) independent nouns.

Verbal nouns are produced when adding *-na*, *-ta*, *-ra*, *-raa*, *-ha*, or *-h* to the end of a verb root. For example, *mae* 'to die' can be suffixed to create the derived form *maena* 'death'. This same derivational process can also be applied to adjectives, as in *sieni* 'good' and *sienina* 'goodness'.

Independent nouns are created using *na*, which is added to the back of a noun to either indicate some kind of relationship or to change cardinal numbers to ordinal ones (see Numerals table at the bottom of the page).^[3]

Verbs

Verbs depict an action. The Oroha language has something known as verb particles. These particles are used as prefixes with the actual verb to create words. The particles *ko*, *koi*, *ka*, *ke*, and *ka 'i* may be used.^[3]

Adjectives

Modifiers follow their head noun. Special adjectives can be used to compare objects. They are usually paired together with prepositions or adverbs to show this comparison. For example, *riutaa* 'beyond, in excess' shows a comparison between two or more objects.^[3]

Adverbs

There are four categories of adverbs: condition, manner, time, and place.^[3]

Numerals

Number	Normal numbers	Ordinal numbers
1	'eta	'etana
2	rua	ruana
3	'ooru	'ooruna
4	hai	haina
5	nima	nimana
6	'oono	'oonona
7	hiu	hiuna
8	waru	waruna
9	siwa	siwana
10	tanaharu	tanaharu 'ana

Ordinal numbers come before the noun when describing how many of an object exist.^[3]

References

1. Oroha (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/ora/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Oroha" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/oroh1237>). *Glottolog* 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Ivens, W. G. (1927). "A Study of the Oroha Language, Mala, Solomon Islands". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London*. 4 (3): 587–610. ISSN 1356-1898 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/1356-1898>). JSTOR 606957 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/606957>).

External links

- [OrohaLanguage.org](http://orohalanguage.org/) (<http://orohalanguage.org/>) - an online, in-progress grammar of Oroha
- Online version of the 1927 Ivens "A Study of the Oroha Language" article (http://paradisec.org.au/fieldnotes/image_viewer.htm?IOROH101,24,1,L)
- Materials on Oroha are included in the open access [Arthur Capell collections](http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC1) (AC1 (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC1>) and AC2 (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC2>)) held by [Paradisec](http://paradisec.org).

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